Northumberland Coast National Landscape

11.11.24

Interpretation Plan

Produced by:

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Contents

This interpretation plan offers guidance to anyone involved in planning or commissioning interpretation projects in the Northumberland Coast National Landscape. This may include work undertaken by the Northumberland Coast National Landscape team, local authority, Parish Council, National Landscape partners, or voluntary and community groups.

Purpose

This plan is designed to:

- Guide the development of quality, coherent and consistent interpretation across the Northumberland Coast National Landscape.

- Outline the purpose and aims of interpretation in the Northumberland Coast National Landscape.

- Advise on how to use interpretation to engage with a wide range of residents and visitors.

- Give direction to storytelling across the Northumberland Coast National Landscape, identifying a central concept, central theme, sub-themes and example storylines for interpreting the landscape's special qualities.

- Review existing interpretation and provide recommendations for interpretation implementation.

- Provide best practice strategic, content and design principles for delivering interpretation.

- Identify where and how interpretation should be delivered in order to reinforce the overall interpretation messages.

Interpretation Plan

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What is Interpretation?

Interpretation is primarily a communication process that helps people make sense of, and understand more about, your site, collection or event.

Association of Heritage Interpretation
ahi.org.uk

Interpretation is a purposeful approach to communication that facilitates meaningful, relevant, and inclusive experiences that deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and inspire engagement with the world around us.

National Association of Interpretation
interpnet.com

When delivered well, interpretation can help people to learn about and understand heritage. It can help to provide an enjoyable, memorable experience at heritage sites, and engage a wider range of people. It can influence behaviour and change mind-sets.

Interpretation interrupts people on their journey. It encourages discovery. It encourages people to stop, look, listen and remember.

Some useful background reading includes:

- *Interpreting our heritage*, 1957, Freeman Tilden.

- *Interpretation: Making a Difference on Purpose*, 2013, Sam Ham.

- *Interpretive Planning: The 5-M Model for Successful Planning Projects,* 2nd Ed 2014, Lisa Brochu.

Interpretive aims

"Interpretation will support the organisation to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Landscape."

For interpretation to support the delivery of the Northumberland Coast National Landscape Management Plan, and really make a difference, it must be developed to deliver interpretive aims.

Interpretation in the Northumberland Coast National Landscape should:

1. Raise awareness

- Promote the existence of the Northumberland Coast National Landscape.
- Promote understanding of this National Landscape's special qualities.
- Promote understanding of this designation, and as part of a national portfolio.
- Demonstrate value of conservation designation and effort.
- Orientate visitors within the National Landscape and at its specific sites.

2. Promote responsible / positive behaviour

- Encourage sustainable travel.
- Disperse visitors from hotspots.
- Promote the Countryside Code.
- Encourage good interpretation practice among partners and stakeholders.
- Promote landscape protection / stewardship.

3. Be relevant to target audiences

- Provide inclusive and accessible routes into experiencing the Northumberland Coast National Landscape and its special qualities.
- Help audiences to recognise the value of the landscape and its special qualities.
- Encourage exploration of the landscape according to audience motivation and interest in the special qualities
- Help different people to understand and find relevance in the special qualities

Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.

Freeman Tilden, 1957

Interpretation is meaningless without an audience. Targeting specific audiences is a key consideration when developing interpretation. Their needs, interests, motivations and barriers to engagement guide us to develop appropriate content and utilise appropriate media.

Interpretation in the Northumberland Coast National Landscape must be developed for and with target audiences to:

- afford the greatest physical and intellectual access

- ensure a great, memorable experience

Different organisations use different ways to define their audiences e.g. through using demographics, segmentation models. For the purposes of this plan, four broad target audiences for the Northumberland Coast National Landscape have been identified:

- **Residents**

- **Visitors**

- **Businesses**

- **Partner organisations**

These groups are not exclusive, they can overlap and individual people or groups can assume different or multiple roles depending on circumstances.

Target audiences

Residents

The coast's population is older than for Northumberland county, and economic activity is lower. Wages fall below the county average, and there are few employment opportunities outside tourism. The local population profile is changing as increasingly residents represent either incomers or temporary (i.e. second-home) owners.

Specific examples in this category include:

- Dog walkers
- National Landscape volunteers
- Children of primary school age
- People who are currently under-represented

Visitors

The coast attracts far more visitors than other areas of the county. STEAM data indicates steady increases in staying and day-visitors. This growth has environment and landscape impacts, and affects the quality of life of residents.

Specific examples in this category include:

- Day visitors
- Trail walkers
- Holidaying families with children and young people
- Visitors with cars and campers

Businesses

Tourism is the major employer and economic driver. Working with tourism businesses can help to develop a sustainable tourism model with a higher-value, lower volume, low-carbon, low waste product.

Specific examples in this category include:

- Accommodation businesses
- Food / beverage outlets
- Visitor / heritage attractions
- Boat tour operators
- Golf course owners
- Farmers

Partner organisations

The Northumberland Coast National Landscape Partnership includes representatives from key stakeholders and interest groups. The Partnership pursues and champions the purposes of designation and assists in delivery of partners' statutory duties and other management aspirations.

Specific examples in this category include:

- Northumberland County Council
- Organisations such as National Trust, English Heritage
- Estate managers
- Parish Councils
- Community groups
- Special interest groups

Themes

The theme... is the overarching conclusion about the topic you'd like your audience to consider - to think about.

Sam H. Ham, 2013

The stories that we want communicate must be organised into themes, to give coherence to what we are saying and to help the audiences reach a conclusion.

Different stories can be told according to the specific context i.e. the location, audiences and management priorities.

The words used in this 'themes' section does not reflect the actual language that you would use, although they can be a good starting point.

Central concept

The Northumberland Coast is special because of its wild, beautiful, **tranquil** coastline, punctuated by castles that dominate the landscape.

We benefit from and enjoy this landscape. We need to **work together** protect what makes it special. We share responsibility for its **conservation** for future generations

Central Theme

Keeping the Peace – We must work together to protect and conserve the tranquillity of this ever-changing landscape.

- This landscape is protected as one of England's portfolio of National Landscapes.

- We value this landscape's natural beauty, for its tranquillity, how it makes us feel, and the opportunities for recreation.

- This landscape is subject to change over time – over centuries and yearly through seasonal change.

- The landscape benefits both people and nature.

- Special qualities are threatened by climate change and overtourism.

- A dedicated team, a partnership of organisations, landowners and local volunteers contribute to this landscape's conservation.

Sub-themes

1. We can maintain the beauty of this landscape by taking positive action.

2. We are all part of this evolving landscape.

3. It takes a lot of work to conserve this landscape.

4. This coast sustains lives and livelihoods.

Sub-themes

1. We can maintain the beauty of this landscape by taking positive action.

This draws attention to activism, and highlighting ways in which audiences can contribute to conservation.

Some stories / devices to achieve this include:

- We can explore more of the National Landscape and avoid parking stress by leaving our cars behind.
- We benefit shops, businesses and communities by spending locally.
- Let's protect nests, animals, and wildflowers by leaving them alone.
- We can protect this landscape by not driving, taking away our litter, keeping our dogs under control and not lighting fires or BBQs.
- We can help to monitor the changes in the landscape by reporting what we see.

2. We are all part of this evolving landscape.

This highlights the sensitive and dynamic environment and the role of people in relation to the designation's special qualities.

Some stories / devices to achieve this include:

- This coastline constantly changes shape as the sea smashes into the land.
- We can support management of the coast by creating places for nature and wildlife.
- We have managed this coastline for centuries by building defensive and protective structures.
- As the landscape changes throughout the year, so does the wildlife that make this place their home.
- Climate change affects the seasons, the landscape and the animal migration patterns.

3. It takes a lot of work to conserve this landscape.

This focuses on the role of conservation management and the importance of collaboration between agencies.

Some stories / devices to achieve this include:

- The Northumberland Coast is protected as a National Landscape, but parts of the sea and coast have other legal protections too.
- Landowners, managers, local and national organisations and volunteers keep this place special.
- Farmers along the coast are changing the way they manage their land so that more wildlife habitats are being created
- Wetlands near the coast have survived better than further inland, and now more of these important features are being reintroduced.

4. This coast sustains lives and livelihoods.

This explores the relationship of the landscape to humans, animals and plants that inhabit it.

Some stories / devices to achieve this include:

- We understand that the sea and the shore can be dangerous so we have people to keep us safe.
- Fishing has historically been the main occupation along the coast.
- Our communities have traded agricultural products along the coast to support their fishing trade.
- Rocky islands, beaches and a rich natural food resource support our large colonies of seabirds and seals.
- Specialist plant communities make their homes on our dry, harsh and shifting sand dunes.
- The coast has provided places of peace and solitude for individuals and communities for hundreds of years.
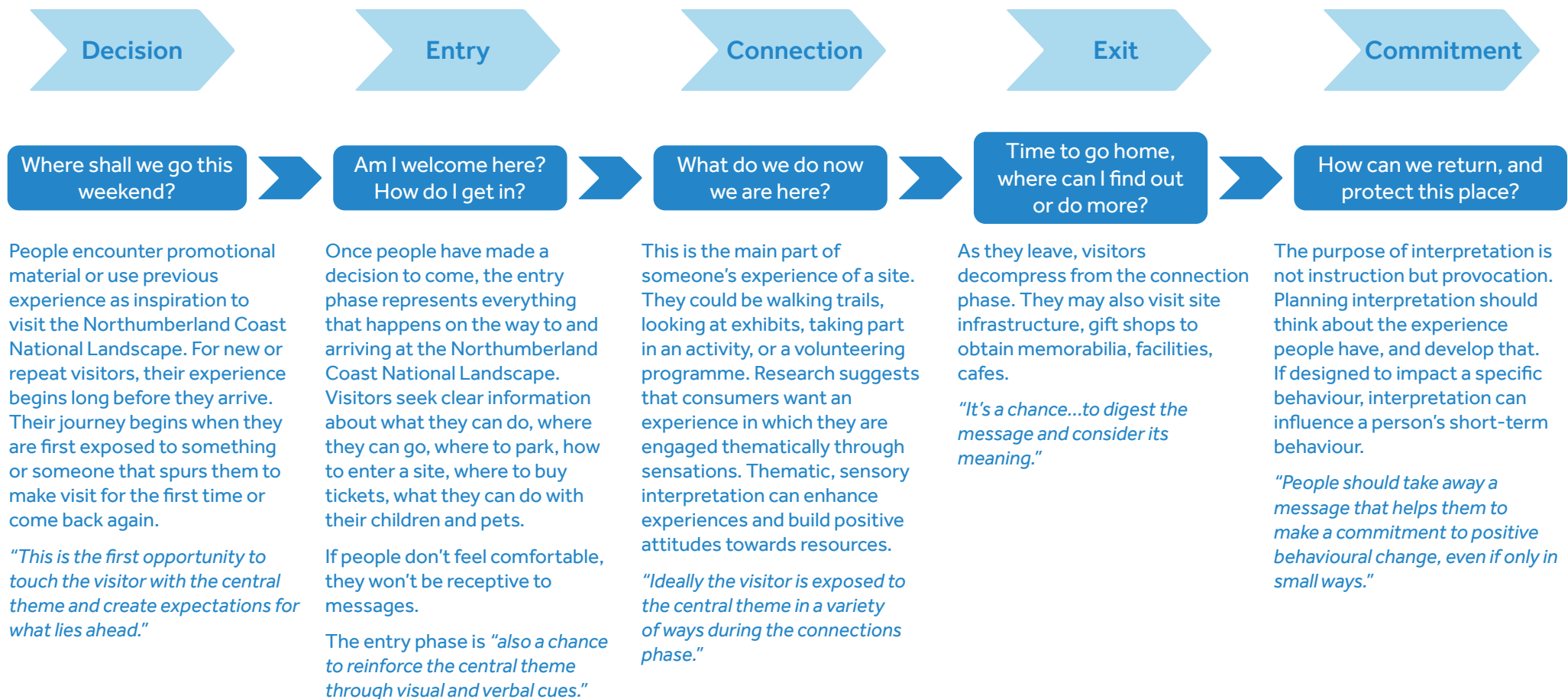- Tourism provides a living for our communities today.

Audit and Recommendations

The visitor journey

Interpretive themes and stories are communicated by media that people encounter over five stages of their 'visitor journey'.

This interpretive audit describes current media types encountered in each phase, and initial recommendations for each.

Decision	Entry	Connection	Exit	Commitment
Where shall we go this weekend?	Am I welcome here? How do I get in?	What do we do now we are here?	Time to go home, where can I find out or do more?	How can we return, and protect this place?

Decision

People encounter promotional material or use previous experience as inspiration to visit the Northumberland Coast National Landscape. For new or repeat visitors, their experience begins long before they arrive. Their journey begins when they are first exposed to something or someone that spurs them to make visit for the first time or come back again.

"This is the first opportunity to touch the visitor with the central theme and create expectations for what lies ahead."

Entry

Once people have made a decision to come, the entry phase represents everything that happens on the way to and arriving at the Northumberland Coast National Landscape. Visitors seek clear information about what they can do, where they can go, where to park, how to enter a site, where to buy tickets, what they can do with their children and pets.

If people don't feel comfortable, they won't be receptive to messages.

The entry phase is *"also a chance to reinforce the central theme through visual and verbal cues."*

Connection

This is the main part of someone's experience of a site. They could be walking trails, looking at exhibits, taking part in an activity, or a volunteering programme. Research suggests that consumers want an experience in which they are engaged thematically through sensations. Thematic, sensory interpretation can enhance experiences and build positive attitudes towards resources.

"Ideally the visitor is exposed to the central theme in a variety of ways during the connections phase."

Exit

As they leave, visitors decompress from the connection phase. They may also visit site infrastructure, gift shops to obtain memorabilia, facilities, cafes.

"It's a chance...to digest the message and consider its meaning."

Commitment

The purpose of interpretation is not instruction but provocation. Planning interpretation should think about the experience people have, and develop that. If designed to impact a specific behaviour, interpretation can influence a person's short-term behaviour.

"People should take away a message that helps them to make a commitment to positive behavioural change, even if only in small ways."

Based on and quoting from Lisa Brochu, 2003

What does current interpretation reveal?

Assessment of the existing interpretation in the National Landscape has shown that:

- Interpretation needs improved co-ordination across the National Landscape to deliver the aims of the Management Plan.

- A variety of organisations, hosts and providers deliver information, orientation and management messaging.

- There is a 'top-down' delivery style, often influenced by the need to display legal and essential health and safety information and instructions.

- Communication varies in tone, appearance and content.

- There are currently no 'entry points' where audiences are introduced to the landscape and its special qualities.

- Media delivers very site-specific messages and stories rather than wider themes or messages.

- There is a need to better coordinate the use of digital media to support interpretation.

- Information and interpretation panels proliferate, often resulting in signage clutter.

- Much of the interpretive media, in particular panels, is dated and requires maintenance. This gives a poor impression of the area.

- No formal evaluation of interpretation is undertaken.

Current media

Digital

- Visit Northumberland website (top Google search result for 'Northumberland Coast') – promotes key destinations and experiences
- Northumberland Coast National Landscape website (second Google result) 'Plan your visit' pages
- Northumberland Coast Path website
- Interactive maps (Coast Path)
- Northumberland Coast National Landscape Visitor Guide (download)
- Northumberland County Council Visitor Guide (download)
- 'Bring your dog to the coast' (download)
- Widely-used tourism websites (i.e. TripAdvisor)
- Tourism businesses advertising dog-friendly beaches
- TV / radio / film and social media

Print media

- Tourism business brochures
- Official Northumberland Coast Path Guidebook
- Local/Regional/National Press

Recommendations (short term)

- Use Northumberland Coast National Landscape website to provide and promote 'one-stop online shop' for providing interpretation about the National Landscape.
- Agreement on who is the responsible organisation for providing and managing visitor information service. Partners can then direct people to the appropriate sources of valid, up-to-date visitor information.
- Continue to work with partners and stakeholders who already provide information that relates to the National Landscape to ensure the coherence and consistency of communicating key themes.

Recommendations (mid-long term)

- Undertake audience research to find out what people are interested in and which media suits their motivations in order to influence their decision to come to the coast.
- Provide interpretation that promotes and supports car-free travel and dispersal from honeypots, for example via thematic trails and options to visit out of season.
- Revise and promote visitor information through appropriate media. Influence people to visit the website to further content to help them to find out more and consider returning for an interpretive experience or event.

Current media

Signage

- Roadside gateway at Amble Braid
- Signage at gateway car parks or visitor hotspots (Warkworth Links Picnic Site, Alnmouth, High Newton and Beadnell, i.e. 'Welcome to Beadnell' panel)
- Branded waymarkers (Coast Path fingerposts)
- Branded promoted walking and cycling routes
- Branded public transport routes (i.e. Arriva Coast and Castles route)
- On-site behaviour signage (i.e. parking, ground-nesting birds / clean up after your dog – 'Have you parked on the path?' signage)
- Signs to / adverts for principal visitor attractions

People-led support

- Northumberland Coast National Landscape Conservation Team
- Volunteers from other organisations
- Walk and Tour providers
- Local digital content creators
- Parish Councils, local community and special interest groups

Recommendations (short term)

- Use interpretation to help audiences feel welcome and able to access the National Landscape.
- Use interpretation to roll out National Landscape brand and agree brand and design approach with partners and stakeholders.
- Coordinate and promote a culture of shared responsibility for delivery of interpretation across relevant parties, stakeholders and communities. This might include the establishment of an interpretation 'Task Force' to plan and oversee the implementation of interpretation across the National Landscape.
- Use thematic, consistent, clear messaging about the National Landscape.
- Work with transport companies to introduce interpretive themes and stories onto services.

Recommendations (mid-long term)

- Plan desired signage amendments over next 5 years across the National Landscape - establishing gateways and satellite sites and points of interest.
- Identify roles of digital media (i.e. websites) in helping people to interpret the National Landscape.
- Work towards consistency of design and people-led interpretation.
- Create a sense of arrival at the National Landscape, including use of physical and digital media where appropriate.
- Implement interpretation training for people who are involved in visitor-facing and advocacy roles, including businesses.

Connection Phase media

Current media

Information and Interpretation panels

- Extensive use of onsite interpretation panels at points of interest which are delivered in various designs.
- Partner-owned sites (i.e. National Nature Reserves)

Person-led experiences

- Blue badge guides
- Outdoor experiences (i.e. Boat Trips)
- Guided walks (i.e. Historical Tours; Themed geo-walks)
- Events (i.e. Bioblitz)

Print and online media

- Self-guided trails / routes
- Guidebooks (i.e. plantlife, geology/landscape, historic buildings)
- Digital content (i.e. previous project websites)

Recommendations (short term)

- Develop physical an intellectual interpretation solutions that meet the needs of audiences and that ensure equal access.
- Use on-site media to promote consistent messaging when person-led interpretation is not feasible.
- Reduce number of interpretation panels where they proliferate.
- Present information about the Northumberland Coast National Landscape interpretively - to ensure delivery of themes.
- Use digital media as an extension of the on-site experience, to support deeper engagement in connection and exit phases (scan me).
- Use digital media to provide additional / supporting information (scan me).

Recommendations (mid-long term)

- Use interpretation techniques that deepen engagement and drive support for conservation management in this landscape. These should include a mix of media for accessibility, to cater to different preferences and to facilitate ongoing conversations.
- Identify digital media that can be developed for the platforms and devices that people are using.
- Enhance and promote themed experiences that facilitate deeper understanding and connections with the Northumberland Coast National Landscape, especially with residents and local businesses. This should build on previous experience with partners e.g. Northumbrian Earth and Space for Shorebirds.

Exit Phase media

Current media

Print media

- Posters (i.e. Northumberland County Council tourism messaging in food/beverage venues)
- Take-away marketing materials – tend to promote National Landscape locations / experiences without National Landscape desired messaging.

Information and Interpretation panels

- Onsite information at exit infrastructure (e.g. shops, public transport, car parks, toilets)

Recommendations (short term)

- Raise awareness of the Northumberland Coast National Landscape by having appropriate sources of online interpretation and promoting events that deepen engagement.
- With partners establish the best place to signpost people to find out visitor information and events listings.
- Identify locations where interpretive messaging can be integrated into existing infrastructure.

Recommendations (mid-long term)

- Provide online materials that encourage in-depth exploration of the landscape beyond the honeypots, and that promote conservation.
- Provide interpretation that will influence behaviour change following a visit.
- Use 'what to do next time' reflection to influence repeat visit behaviour e.g. using public transport to avoid car parking stress, extending stays beyond the day-trip to experience the dark skies and landscape at different times of day.

Commitment Phase media

Current media

Print media

- 'Have you enjoyed your visit?' prompt (Visitor Guide 2022/23) "The Northumberland coast is a beautiful place, with lots of wildlife and a clean environment that is accessible. This doesn't happen by accident."

- Help us protect this place (i.e. Space for Shorebirds leaflets)

- 'What can you do?' messaging in print (i.e. (Visitor Guide 2022/23 Guide) – Join us; Please volunteer / donate

- 'Come again' messaging, i.e. visit our other sites or other National Landscapes

Digital media

- Join Our Volunteer Community

- Project information pages (i.e. previous project websites)

- Find out more

- News and project updates

- Plan your next visit

Recommendations (short term)

- Support audiences to 'commit' to the Northumberland Coast National Landscape by providing clear onward routes to get involved, e.g. donate, volunteer, share their experience.

Recommendations (mid-long term)

- Revise and promote the visitor guide to present experiences and opportunities to support conservation and improve connections with the Northumberland Coast National Landscape.

- Use interpretation to enhance learning and understanding of the Northumberland Coast National Landscape among partners, stakeholders and residents.

- Aim to deepen engagement, raise awareness and influence the decision phase of repeat visitors.

Interpretation Guidelines

Strategic delivery

Interpretation for the Northumberland Coast National Landscape should be strategically developed to:

- Deliver the interpretive aims.

- Deliver interpretation that communicates the central theme and sub-themes.

- Engage and involve specific target audiences according to the context.

- Ensure that it is developed so that it is clear how it fits into the visitor experience.

- Be evaluated for its effectiveness.

Planning and implementation

All interpretation should be implemented according to the specific context:

- Seek help, if required, from professionals to support delivery of interpretation or to supply training/skills development. Producing good interpretive content requires skill and understanding of storytelling techniques and the chosen media.

- Get support and advice from an interpretation 'Task Force' that includes partners, stakeholders, supporters, businesses and landowners, as appropriate.
  This should:

  - Help raise awareness and support the aims of this plan and its delivery.
  - Support shared responsibility for interpretation delivery and ongoing management and maintenance.
  - Ensure a joined-up approach and avoid duplication.

- Work with partners, stakeholders, supporters, businesses, landowners, residents and visitors. Collaboration should start at the planning stage and go right through to content development and implementation. This supports creation of interpretation that makes authentic connections.

- Ensure that management / maintenance resources are allocated appropriately.

Northumberland
Coast
National
Landscape

Content delivery

Interpretive content must:

- Be developed for the specific context within the National Landscape.

- Communicate the central and sub-themes through the use of specific special qualities in a given place.

- Use specific detail to create wonder and surprise. Instead of using the phrase 'special qualities', consider the context and use it to suggest reasons that people will find it special.

- Influence behaviour by speaking directly to unwelcome behaviour, and reinforce positive behaviours.

- Be developed for a specific audience. Put yourself in the audience's shoes and think about what you might say in response to their questions - What is it? Why should I care? What make this place special? Why is it being conserved and protected? What is going on here? Where can I go? What can I see? What can I do to conserve and protect this landscape?

- Speak directly to target audiences.

  - Don't assume that all visitors know what a National Landscape is. Start with what your target audience knows.
  - It must be produced for – and with – specific target audiences identified for the context.
  - Be entry-level rather than specialist.
  - Be people-led, using real voices and real stories. Provide personal stories from individuals that provide powerful interpretations of heritage and help to illustrate the interpretive themes.
  - Provoke and engage the audiences. Involve the audiences in a discussion.
  - Use concise but conversational language.
  - Engage the senses - look, listen, feel, smell, taste - to help people connect with the landscape environment.

- Support the visitor journey

  - Be accessible and inclusive.
  - Make people feel at ease and welcome.
  - Provide positive cues that help to address expectations, particularly related to seasonality.
  - Help people to directly experience a special quality.
  - Signpost people to the next stage of their visitor experience.
  - Include a call to action.

'Must haves'

Where possible, interpretive content should include:

- Reference to designation:
  - Northumberland Coast National Landscape
  - Other designations according to context e.g. Scheduled Monument, Site of Special Scientific Interest

- Reference to a specific special quality/qualities.

- Reference to specific site/place management messages.

- Practical guidance or signpost people to information on how to access, engage with and enjoy the coast.

- Clear reference to partners and stakeholders as appropriate to the context.

- Specific and consistent behavioural messages:
  - Take your litter home – leave no trace of your visit.
  - Dog poo – bag it and bin it – any public waste bin will do.
  - Care for nature – do not cause damage or disturbance.

Language delivery examples

Inclusive - Make people feel at ease and welcome.

Follow the path to explore [insert place] and make memories of this special place.

Don't start by saying -

Welcome. You are now entering the Northumberland Coast National Landscape, a designated area protected by law.'

Instead say -

You have arrived. Love this beach? Beautiful, isn't it? Help protect this place for everyone that loves it.

United - refer to specific site/place management messages.

Help the National Trust protect Low Newton Beach by leaving no trace and taking all litter home.

Help us maintain Warkworth Beach's beauty by cleaning up after your dog and taking all litter home.

Bright - Provide positive cues that help to address expectations, particularly related to seasonality.

We can't see any Arctic terns here! Ah, but that's because they've gone home to Antartica for the winter. What other birds can you see?

Spot different sea birds according to the season, from xx breeding here in spring/summer to xx arriving for the autumn/winter.

Sensorial - Engage the senses - look, listen, feel, smell, taste - to help people connect with the landscape environment.

Listen to the waves. Worshippers heard the same sounds at Ebb's Nook over 800 years ago.

Inquisitive - Involve the audiences in a discussion.

The shape of the coast is continuously changing at Alnmouth. There are defences here to protect the village, golf course and plants from erosion. Should we let nature take its course or shield the coastline from a further shift?

Specific - Don't be generic, for example, don't say 'special qualities', instead refer to a specific special quality/qualities.

Don't say -

One of the special qualities of the Northumberland Coast National Landscape is its historic environment.

Instead say -

The lime kiln at Beadnell tells us about the important jobs our community did in the past.

Real - Be people-led, using real voices and real stories.

The Space for Shorebirds rangers are out on the coast protecting the birds in all seasons.

Here at the Northumberland Coast National Landscape, our Conservation Team volunteers do vital work including beach cleans and wildlife surveying to help preserve this beautiful coastline.

Purposeful - Include a call to action.

Support our Conservation Team to help keep Warkworth Beach special. Go to northumberlandcoast-nl.org.uk for more information about volunteering. You can also make a donation here.

Birds scare easily. Please give them space and follow signage to help protect their breeding habits.

For further information refer to the 2023 National Landscapes Brand guidelines.

Design approach

Strategic design

Interpretation for the Northumberland Coast National Landscape should be strategically designed to:

- Follow the Northumberland Coast National Landscape brand guidance for interpretation.

- Balance the design needs and requirements of partners and stakeholders.

- Complement and support the National Landscape management principles messaging, e.g. tranquillity, conservation, working together.

- Be developed according to accessibility standards, adhering to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and universal design principles to ensure that the interpretation is as inclusive and welcoming as possible in usability and practicality.

- Ensure that there is a feedback mechanism for ongoing improvement.

Media design and implementation

All interpretive media should be designed and implemented according to the specific context:

Graphic design should be produced that:

- Has a standard approach, when led by the Northumberland Coast National Landscape.

- Works with partner and stakeholder brand requirements to produce an agreed approach.

- Has eye-catching design using colours and fonts that are in keeping with the brand, themes and place.

- Has clear, accessible, easy-to-read layouts, designed for all learning styles.

- Has a content hierarchy, incorporating different levels of content detail, text, quotes, imagery and graphic elements.

Structures should be designed according to specific criteria:

- Appropriate designs that fit within the space, landscape and context of the site.

- Material type should be specified according to the relevant context.

- Materials for structures should be locally sourced or found locally as a first port-of-call.

- Contain multi-sensory elements, appealing to a mixture of learning styles.

- Sustainably produced to ensure minimal management and maintenance and longevity.

Digital design should ensure that:

- It is developed to support – not duplicate – other media in a given context.

- It is developed to support the visitor journey.

Must haves

All interpretive designs must include:

- Northumberland Coast National Landscape logo

Evaluation and continuous improvement

To ensure the interpretation remains effective and relevant, a robust evaluation process should be implemented:

- Regular reviews to asses interpretive materials and installations should be conducted to ensure they continue to meet interpretive aims, strategic goals and visitor needs.

- Visitor feedback could include, surveys, comment cards, and digital engagement metrics, could be used to gather insights from audiences. This data will inform updates and enhancements.

- Adaptive Design interpretation materials should be designed with flexibility in mind, allowing for content updates as needed based on evaluation outcomes.

- Ongoing collaboration with partners and stakeholders should be maintained to ensure alignment with priorities of all involved.

Safety and compliance

All interpretive structures and materials will be designed and implemented with safety and compliance as top priorities:

- Installations will adhere to local planning and environmental regulations, as well as safety standards for public spaces.

- Comprehensive risk assessments will be carried out for all new installations to identify potential hazards and implement mitigation strategies.

- Interpretive materials and structures will be designed to withstand environmental factors such as wind, rain, and coastal conditions, minimising risks to visitors.

- All designs will be fully compliant with accessibility regulations, ensuring that all visitors, regardless of ability, can engage with the content safely and comfortably.

- Structures and media will be sensitively positioned to avoid disruption to wildlife habitats and natural and historic features, particularly in conservation areas.

- This focus on safety and compliance ensures that interpretation not only enhances visitor experience but also meets high standards of safety and environmental responsibility.

Northumberland Coast National Landscape

As part of the overall National Landscapes brand, an identity and colour palette have been created for use by interpretation of the Northumberland Coast National Landscape.

When Effra is unavailable, the system typeface that should be used is Lexend. Lexend is a open sourced Google Font, available to download here

Logos

Northumberland Coast National Landscape

Northumberland Coast National Landscape

Effra bold – heading/subheading

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

0123456789

Effra regular – body copy

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

0123456789

Main colours – skies

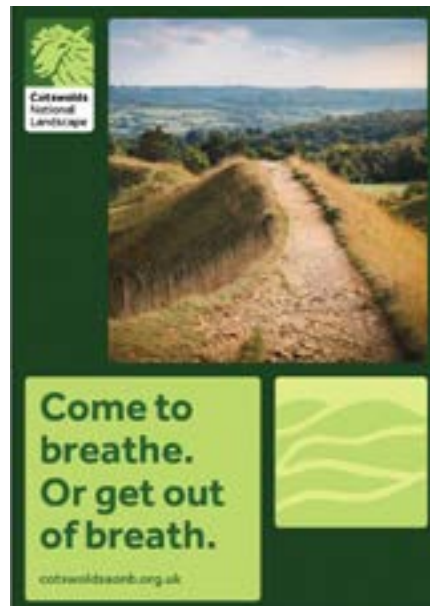| 79/37/0/0 | 75/24/0/0 | 51/3/3/0 | 37/2/5/0 |

National Landscape branding

Other National Landscape logos

Brand illustration and icon examples

Application examples from other National Landscapes using the brand tile structure and set palettes.

The range of suggested materials to use across the Northumberland Coast National Landscape has been carefully chosen to ensure continuity and robustness while allowing flexibility for the best material choices at each location. The selection takes inspiration from existing materials already in place throughout the area but updates the approach to align with the new brand identity. This reinforces consistency across the landscape while accommodating the unique needs and characteristics of each site.

This ensures that while the look and feel remain cohesive across the entire stretch, the updates reflect current standards, offer durability, and ease of maintenance in various environments.

Key Materials
Green oak

- Naturally durable and weather-resistant.

- Ages naturally, blending into natural environments over time.

- Already used at locations on the coast.

Galvanised steel

- Modern and sleek, offering a contemporary contrast to natural materials.

- Highly durable and resistant to corrosion, suitable for exposed coastal conditions.

- Can be laser cut or engraved to create a tactile or textural finish.

- Already used at locations on the coast.

Stone

- Locally sourced, where possible, and relevant to reflect the geological character of the area.

- Provides a robust material that integrates with historic sites.

- Already used at locations on the coast.

Environmentally Friendly Interpretation Panels

- Durable to withstand harsh weather conditions, ensuring longevity and coastal conditions.

- High-quality print and finish to maintain readability and appearance over time.

- Can be adapted to use with oak, steel and sandstone or a combination of these materials.
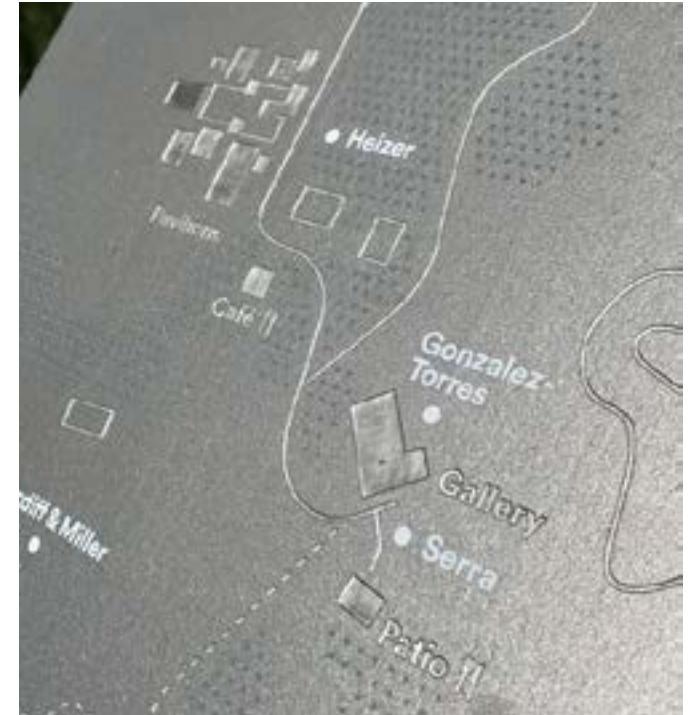
Media implementation

Making a decision about media needs to consider the five stage of the visitor journey. Each media intervention needs to be developed to deliver interpretive aims and principles and in consideration of its placement in the visitor journey.

Decision

**Where shall we go this weekend?**

Media

- Website content
- Social media posts
- Marketing and promotional materials

For example

- Website content: present a self-guided, downloadable trail with the theme 'Builders of Beadnell' (link to theme 4). This can link to other opportunities to experience the site (i.e. guided walks tours).

- Social media posts: short-form films with heritage or conservation specialists to present central theme messaging to target audiences pre-arrival as social media posts. Interview material to lead from (i) their experience of the changing landscape to (ii) promoting enjoyment of tranquility and then (iii) the collaborative work that goes into protecting historic buildings along the coast and why this is important / relevant to the target audiences' experience of the National Landscape.

- Marketing and promotional materials: for events that explicitly support interpretation of the Northumberland Coast National Landscape e.g. the Rooted exhibition and the Amble Puffin Festival.

Visitor journey media

Media implementation

Making a decision about media needs to consider the five stage of the visitor journey. Each media intervention needs to be developed to deliver interpretive principles and in consideration of its placement in the visitor journey.
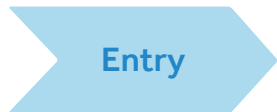
Entry

Am I welcome here?
What can I do here?
How do I get in?

Media

- Clear orientation / welcome signage at arrival / entry points
- Interpretation at identified entry points
- Visitor-facing staff

For example

- Clear orientation / welcome signage at arrival / entry points: a threshold sign at Warkworth Dunes that explicitly references the National Landscape; new orientation signage at Warkworth Dunes car park and Beadnell Bay car park.

- Interpretation at identified entry points: a small panel at Alnmouth bus stop that explicitly references your entry into the National Landscape.

- Visitor-facing staff: volunteers/site staff talking explicitly about the Northumberland Coast National Landscape when they interact with the public.

Visitor journey media

Media implementation

Making a decision about media needs to consider the five stage of the visitor journey. Each media intervention needs to be developed to deliver interpretive principles and in consideration of its placement in the visitor journey.

Connection

What is this place all about?

How is this place relevant to me?

Media

- Person-led experiences
- Gateway / Satellite site interpretation
- Walking/cycling trails

For example

- Person-led experiences: interpretive events, guided walks or tours. The Space for Shorebirds guided walks and Alnmouth Puffin Festival are good examples.

- Gateway / Satellite site interpretation: Physical interventions at key sites, such as new signage at Warkworth Dunes and Newton Links, that present interpretive themes and information at key sites in contexts where person-led experiences are not available.

- Walking/cycling trails: a 'Builders of Beadnell' themed trail could make links between the distinctive buildings of the village, the harbour that made the settlement wealthy, the limekiln that was involved with the export trade, the old quarries and tramways under the modern village and with the businesses that are operating today.

The term 'Gateway' to refer to a place through which visitors enter the National Landscape, typically after travelling a short distance through it to a car park or public transport stop.

Gateway sites serve as primary entry points, featuring:

- Prominent signage and interpretation with National Landscape branding.

- A hub for information and access to wider landscape.

- Digital integration (NFC tags, URL addresses) for deeper engagement.

Name	Why	Sub themes
Warkworth Dunes	To orient visitors to the beach via appropriate routes, to raise awareness of the sensitive habitats nearby, and to promote behaviour that will support their ongoing management.	1. We can maintain the beauty of this landscape by taking positive action. 3. It takes a lot of work to conserve this landscape.
Beadnell Bay	To orient and disperse visitors around the village, to raise awareness of local points of interest, especially seasonal bird colonies, and to promote behaviour that will support their ongoing management.	2. We are all part of this evolving landscape. 4. This coast sustains lives and livelihoods.
Newton Links Car Park, Link House Beach	To orient visitors to points of interest along this section of coast, to raise awareness of the sensitive habitats nearby, to promote landscape conservation, and to promote the coast path as a sustainable tourism option.	1. We can maintain the beauty of this landscape by taking positive action. 2. We are all part of this evolving landscape. 3. It takes a lot of work to conserve this landscape.
Craster Quarry Car Park and WC	There are two boards on stone plinths in this location that are outdated. The location is an opportunity to intercept visitors arriving en route to the village, and the bus service links the car park to the coast path travel option. There is also an opportunity to manage visitors by orienting them towards points of interest around the village.	1. We can maintain the beauty of this landscape by taking positive action. 4. This coast sustains lives and livelihoods.
Amble Braid car park	The town forms a natural entry point from the south and is located on the Coast Path and NCN1 Coast & Castles route. Amble Braid car park could divert pressure away from town centre.	1. We can maintain the beauty of this landscape by taking positive action. 2. We are all part of this evolving landscape.
High Newton	The bus stop needs a complete upgrade and a covered waiting area may present opportunities to communicate.	1. We can maintain the beauty of this landscape by taking positive action. 3. It takes a lot of work to conserve this landscape.
Low Newton Car Park	Orient visitors to beach, coast path and points of interest	1. We can maintain the beauty of this landscape by taking positive action. 3. It takes a lot of work to conserve this landscape.
Amble bus station, Church Street	Orient visitors	1. We can maintain the beauty of this landscape by taking positive action. 3. It takes a lot of work to conserve this landscape.
Holy Island	Orient visitors	1. We can maintain the beauty of this landscape by taking positive action. 2. We are all part of this evolving landscape. 3. It takes a lot of work to conserve this landscape. 4. This coast sustains lives and livelihoods.

Examples of Satellite sites

The term 'Satellite' to refer to locations where there are points of interest or a need to address a specific management issue.

Satellite sites offer in-depth, focused experiences with:

- Creative interpretive panels or structures.

- Opportunities for access to wider landscape.

- Design elements reflecting local character.

Name	Why	Sub themes
Alnmouth (Marine Drive and 5 x other Parish Council trail locations)	Panel-based trail interventions require re-designing. Refreshing would allow rewriting thematic content so relevant to target audiences.	2. We are all part of this evolving landscape. 4. This coast sustains lives and livelihoods.
Low Newton Fisherman's Cottage	Opportunity to orient and disperse visitors, and to engage with the conservation narrative.	3. It takes a lot of work to conserve this landscape. 4. This coast sustains lives and livelihoods.
Bamburgh Lighthouse	Opportunity to refresh existing panel and to gear towards the conservation narrative.	3. It takes a lot of work to conserve this landscape. 4. This coast sustains lives and livelihoods.
Coquet Estuary Weir	Existing panel is dirty but the content is fine. There may be an opportunity to revise the intention and content.	3. It takes a lot of work to conserve this landscape. 4. This coast sustains lives and livelihoods.
Amble Braid History Trail Trailhead	Existing trailhead at Amble Braid for town heritage trail is vandalised and requires leaflet to use.	2. We are all part of this evolving landscape. 4. This coast sustains lives and livelihoods.
Holy Island (various)	Opportunity to engage visitors with the special qualities and conservation narrative.	1. We can maintain the beauty of this landscape by taking positive action. 2. We are all part of this evolving landscape. 3. It takes a lot of work to conserve this landscape. 4. This coast sustains lives and livelihoods.
Historic churches (e.g. Alnmouth, Lesbury, Longhoughton, Warkworth Cemetery Chapel)	Opportunity to engage visitors with the special qualities and conservation narrative.	2. We are all part of this evolving landscape. 4. This coast sustains lives and livelihoods.

Media implementation

Making a decision about media needs to consider the five stage of the visitor journey. Each media intervention needs to be developed to deliver interpretive principles and in consideration of its placement in the visitor journey.

Exit

Time to go home, where can I find out or do more?

Media

- Food/drink/retail/accommodation
- Bannerstand/posters
- Leaflet/hand-out/takeaway print

For example

- Food/drink/retail/accommodation: customer-facing staff at the mobile food truck in Beadnell talking to customers about how tourism contributes to the local economy (link to theme 4).
- Bannerstand/poster: referring to National Landscape stories, events, where to go next.
- Leaflet/hand-out/takeaway print: visitor guide available at visitor attractions.

Media implementation

Making a decision about media needs to consider the five stage of the visitor journey. Each media intervention needs to be developed to deliver interpretive principles and in consideration of its placement in the visitor journey.

Commitment

How can we return, and protect this place?

Media

- Social media content and engagement
- Website content
- Digital content that links to sites in Connection phase
- Volunteer experiences
- In-depth experiences

For example

- Social media content and engagement: Invite people to share their appreciation of the special qualities of the Northumberland Coast National Landscape via social media posts, using as opportunities for collaborative/co-production engagement.
- Website content: 'Find out more' via URLs linked to the material that interprets the special qualities of the National Landscape; events listings.
- Digital content: panels or interventions that link to online materials - short-form videos and longer films - to deepen engagement with the experience for target audiences. Material should allow users to find out more about the subjects that interest or motivate them. Interviews with Beadnell fishermen and boat operators, for example would allow users to relate their work to the sub-themes material.
- Volunteer experiences: signpost opportunities for people to contribute towards protection of special qualities through volunteering, especially with partners.
- In-depth experiences: signpost opportunities for people to learn more about aspects of the special qualities through wildlife awareness experiences.
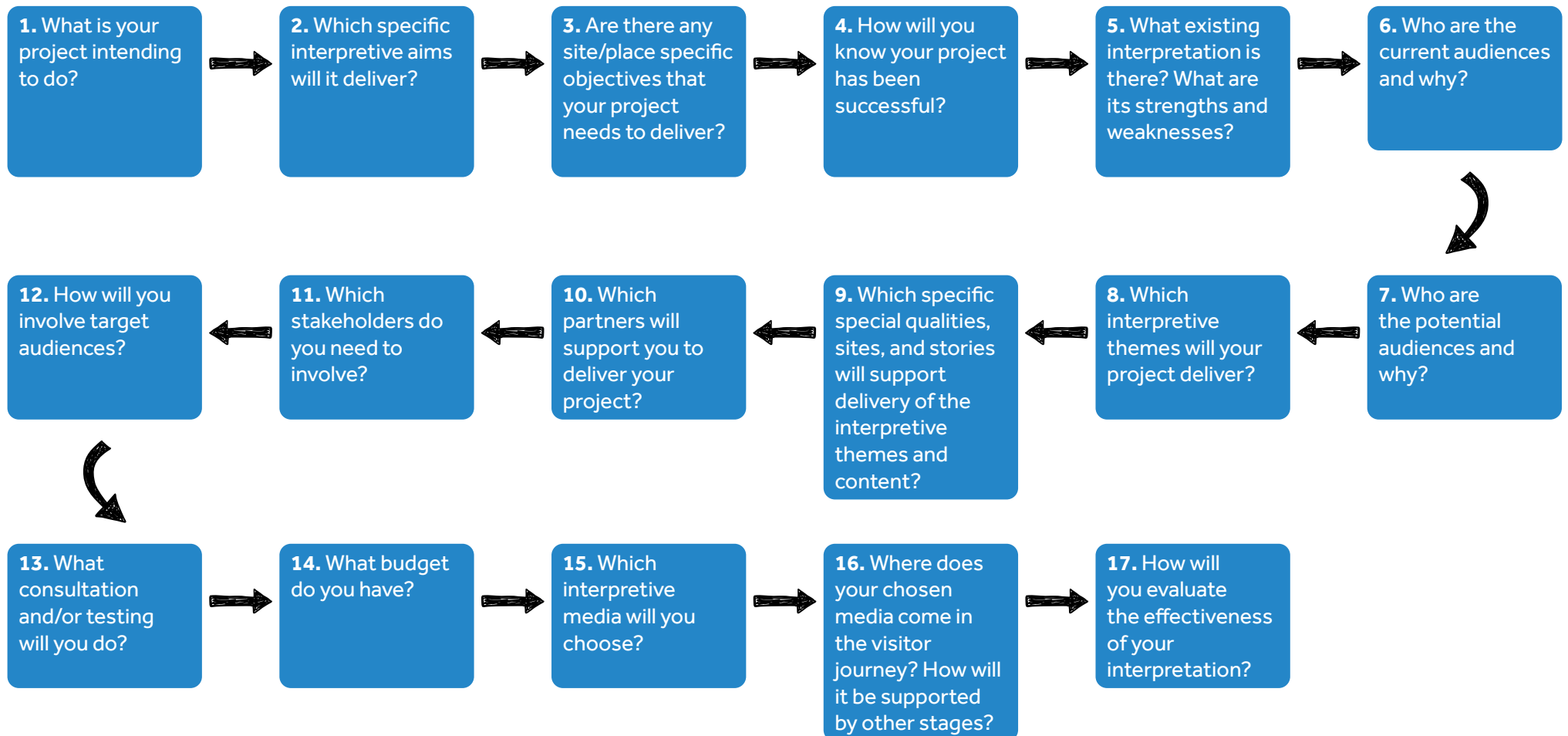
Action Plan

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Why, where and how?

Interpretation must be well-planned in order for it to be successful and to ensure that form follows function.

When thinking about new interpretation you should answer these questions:

1. What is your project intending to do? →

2. Which specific interpretive aims will it deliver? →

3. Are there any site/place specific objectives that your project needs to deliver? →

4. How will you know your project has been successful? →

5. What existing interpretation is there? What are its strengths and weaknesses? →

6. Who are the current audiences and why? ↓

7. Who are the potential audiences and why? ←

8. Which interpretive themes will your project deliver? ←

9. Which specific special qualities, sites, and stories will support delivery of the interpretive themes and content? ←

10. Which partners will support you to deliver your project? ←

11. Which stakeholders do you need to involve? ←

12. How will you involve target audiences? ↓

13. What consultation and/or testing will you do? →

14. What budget do you have? →

15. Which interpretive media will you choose? →

16. Where does your chosen media come in the visitor journey? How will it be supported by other stages? →

17. How will you evaluate the effectiveness of your interpretation?

Northumberland Coast National Landscape Interpretation Case Studies

Produced by:

THE WAY DESIGN

MINERVA HERITAGE

Northumberland
Coast
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Landscape